

**Kathmandu** -- The Government of Nepal, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and UK Department of International Development (DfID) jointly launched the dissemination of 2009 Maternal Mortality and Morbidity study. The current study is the follow-up of the 1998 Maternal Mortality and Morbidity study, with an objective to investigate factors associated with maternal mortality and morbidity in Nepal, particularly the causes of maternal mortality.

The study has been in process for more than one year, with data collected from April 13, 2008 to April 12, 2009. The study shows that the maternal mortality ratio in eight study districts is 229 per 100,000 live births, ranging from 153 to 301 by districts. The study also demonstrates ethnic variations with higher rates among Muslims, Terai/Madhesi and Dalits, as well as geographic variations in maternal mortality.

Dr. Sudha Sharma, Secretary for Ministry of Health and Population remarks, "The study is a landmark for maternal health programs in Nepal, demonstrating both our success and challenges for further reduction of maternal deaths to achieve the Millennium Development Goal."

Ms. Anne Peniston, Director of the Office of Health and Family Planning, USAID/Nepal, said "The study is an invaluable resource for maternal health policy makers and program managers. We hope that the findings will inform the Government of Nepal's new health sector plans and programs for 2010 – 2015."

Key findings of the report also show that maternal causes account for 11 percent of all deaths among women of reproductive age. Of the total maternal deaths, seven in ten were due to direct causes like hemorrhage, eclampsia and abortion-related complications and rest due to indirect causes like heart diseases, anemia, and gastroenteritis. Hemorrhage, although significantly reduced from 41 to 24 percent between 1998 and 2009, remains the leading cause of maternal deaths, followed by eclampsia (21 percent), a pregnancy related complication.